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ABSTRACT

This document provides a statement of principles describing the goals and objectives for the future of secondary education in Tasmania (Australia), and indicates how they should be interpreted. Six topics are covered: (1) trends in the economy and in society; (2) provision for secondary education; (3) the curriculum; (4) students; (5) teachers; and (6) parents and the community. (DB)

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SECONDARY EDUCATION: THE FUTURE

ED332896

Policy Statement

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SECONDARY EDUCATION: THE FUTURE

Policy Statement

Education Department Tasmania Australia

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Education Department Tasmania Australia

Foreword

Educating our young people and equipping them for their adult lives is one of our community's most important responsibilities. It also presents a tremendous challenge – to teachers, to parents and to government.

The principles set out in this booklet are designed to meet that challenge. They recognise that our society is changing at an accelerating rate, and that when our children leave school they will enter a highly competitive world. Accordingly, our education system must:

- develop in students the basic competencies associated with reading, writing and calculating;
- equip them to handle the realities of the world beyond the classroom; and
- be sufficiently flexible to respond promptly to the changes that take place in our community.

At the same time, the principles recognise that Tasmanians expect their education system to help our young people develop their talents to the full, achieve a sense of self-worth, demonstrate care for others, and have pride in and contribute to their community and their country. Tasmanians also expect the education system to ensure that our young people have a real appreciation of those community standards and values which, in time, they will hold in trust for their own children.

The principles outlined in this booklet provide positive guidelines for achieving these aims. I commend this document to all those interested in the future of our people, our education system and our State.

Peter Rae
Minister for Education

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Preface

In March 1986 the Education Department published *Secondary Education: The Future* as a discussion paper. The paper took account of the principles set out in the Scott Report, *Secondary Education in Tasmania*, March 1977; the comments contained in the group leaders' reports from the Centenary Conference on Secondary Education (September 1985); the Schools Board publication, *The Future of Certification in Tasmania* (August 1985); recent reports on secondary education from other states and from other countries; and broad economic and social trends.

During 1986 an extensive process of consultation took place. The discussion paper was distributed widely. Major conferences of principals and vice-principals were held, preceded by staff meetings and discussion. Teachers, students, parents and members of the community were invited to submit comments and suggestions. Subsequently, the discussion paper was revised, taking into account the comments and suggestions that were received.

I am confident that the revised document represents a view of the future for secondary education that has wide support. It provides the basis for planning and action. The Education Department's schools and colleges and the support services – both central and regional – should now work together to implement the principles set out in this policy statement.

K I Axton
Director-General of Education

Introduction

This document is a statement of principles. It has been kept brief and an attempt has been made to write it in a form that will make the ideas accessible to a wide audience.

The principles are accompanied by illustrative comments to indicate the way in which the principles should be interpreted. Supporting documents will be produced during 1987 to assist schools with the implementation of the principles.

It is the responsibility of staff in schools, colleges and support services to implement the principles in ways that fit local conditions and changing circumstances.

The sections into which the document is divided, and the principles themselves, are of equal importance. The order has no significance other than that of editorial convenience.

1. Trends in the economy and in society

Society is changing at an ever-increasing rate. The nature and speed of these changes make it essential that young people are adaptable and flexible if they are to participate effectively in a competitive world. To maintain stability in our society, however, the traditions and values that make up our culture should be preserved through the education programs in our schools and colleges.

These programs must assist students to develop a set of personal values and characteristics that embody the essential beliefs held by our society. Students should be expected to display initiative, act responsibly and honestly, show care and concern for others, value democratic processes and develop a sense of national pride.

1.1 Employment

1.1.1 Ten years ago most young people who considered leaving school at the end of year 10 could expect to get a job. Today's school-leavers can no longer be so confident. Young people know that the competition for jobs will be fierce and that their chances of success will be greatly enhanced if they gain further qualifications. This is a strong incentive for students to continue their education beyond year 10.

1.1.2 The number of jobs available to young people in the 15–19 age-group in Australia has fallen drastically. In 1966 approximately 65 per cent of the 15–19 age-group were in full-time employment. By 1992 it is expected that the number will have dropped to 20 per cent.

Young women are particularly disadvantaged, and at present make up two-thirds of job seekers.

1.1.3 There has been a dramatic increase in part-time employment for men and women. In 1986, 44 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men were in part-time work, and a large proportion of them were in the 15–19 age-group. Approximately 31.0 per cent of women and 19.6 per cent of men were working part time in 1986. Many of the jobs available were dead-end in nature.

1.1.4 The extent of unemployment among school-leavers is creating a subculture that is detrimental to many young Tasmanians. This is happening at a time in their development when their attitudes to life are being formed and set.

1.1.5 Throughout Australia, the options for most 15 to 19-year-olds in the foreseeable future will be additional education and vocational training for many, or work for some, or unemployment. Young people must also be prepared to undertake retraining and to seek work in new locations, wherever suitable employment opportunities exist.

1.1.6 It is unlikely that there will be any significant change in employment levels in the immediate future unless there are major improvements in the economy. The improvements depend on the community's faith in itself, and its willingness and capacity to change.

1.2 The economy

1.2.1 Fundamental changes are occurring in the patterns of international production and trade. These changes are having a major effect on the Australian economy and living standards. Tasmania's isolation and small population create special problems for the State's economy. Fluctuations in the international and national economies may be more sharply felt in Tasmania than in other states.

Tasmania must compete successfully in the national and international economies, particularly in areas where our human and physical resources give us special advantages. Education in specialised areas is an essential part of building Tasmania's competitiveness.

1.2.2 In these circumstances, it is essential that schools and colleges provide young people with an education which – in its content, style and expectations – prepares them for a future characterised by change and uncertainty, and by challenge.

1.2.3 Improvements in the economy and the maintenance of living standards will depend on the capacity of today's adults (including

teachers) to initiate and handle change. It will depend also on the capacity of school-leavers to contribute the knowledge and skills, initiative, enthusiasm and opportunities that their education and training must give them. They should be adaptable and flexible.

1.3 Technology

1.3.1 Changes in technology are affecting the economy and society in an unprecedented fashion. Many people associate these changes with the microchip and its computer applications in a wide variety of fields – from communications to robotics. In fact, the changes are far more pervasive, although the microchip is often a contributory element. Nuclear technology, laser technology and bio-engineering are but three of the other far-reaching applications of scientific knowledge that are affecting society and economic activity.

1.3.2 Already these technologies are affecting employment and production, social and political institutions, relations between the sexes, reproduction of the species, and moral and ethical views.

1.3.3 In all of these matters the electronic media – themselves a product of the new technology – are playing a major role in shaping people's lives, values and culture.

1.3.4 Secondary education must take account of these factors.

1.4 The family

1.4.1 The incidence of family breakdown and separation is at a high level. In recent years the percentage of people who are separated or divorced in Tasmania doubled from 4 per cent in 1971 to 8 per cent in 1981; nearly one-sixth of mothers between the ages of 15 and 50 in 1985 were not married; and about one-third of secondary students have experienced some form of family breakdown.

1.4.2 The emotional disturbance generated by such events can seriously affect the capacity of some students to benefit from

school. Programs in personal relationships help students to deal with these stresses and to make the most of their education.

1.5 The role of women

1.5.1 In recent years the number of women in the paid workforce has increased considerably. In 1981, 49 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 65 were in the workforce and by 1986 this figure had risen to 53 per cent. In the 1981 census, 25 per cent of women were described as heads of families – the main income earners – compared with 19 per cent in 1976. Associated with these trends there has been a marked change in attitudes to the place of women in society. In schools these trends are affecting attitudes to girls and the way they participate in school life.

1.5.2 Despite improved rates of overall participation in post-compulsory schooling, women in Australia still have fewer and lower post-school qualifications than men, earn lower incomes, are more likely to be dependent on pensions and benefits, and are a minority among those in positions of greatest social, political and economic influence.

The OECD has noted that Australia's workforce is the most sex-segregated of all member countries. Many families now rely on female earnings to a significant extent. Although women are employed in a narrow range of relatively poorly paid occupations, more opportunities are opening up for women in the workforce.

1.5.3 Recent research indicates that there are differences in the ways girls and boys approach learning. Furthermore, some girls tend to underestimate their own capacities and have a restricted view of their future. This may be due to social and environmental factors.

1.6 Cultural diversity

1.6.1 Australia is home to people from a wide range of cultures who, consciously or unconsciously, are creating an Australian culture in which they all share. Although Tasmania has less obvious cultural diversity than the mainland states, diversity exists, and must be taken into account to ensure equity, understanding and the enrichment of our culture and traditional values.

1.7 Implications of these trends

1.7.1 Current economic and social trends make changes in secondary schools a matter for immediate action.

1.7.2 Nevertheless, the importance of traditional values and many of the traditional tasks of secondary schools must be reaffirmed. Broadly speaking, these tasks have always been to prepare students to make a living and to make their lives worth living. It is the way the tasks are undertaken that needs to be transformed to take account of the circumstances that now face us.

1.7.3 Because the future is characterised by uncertainty, challenge and increasing economic competition, schools must provide programs that enable students to make important decisions themselves, accept responsibility, act independently and flexibly, and show initiative. The capacity to change and respond effectively to changing circumstances is one of the most important qualities all students need for the future.

1.7.4 To enable students to use these qualities constructively, they need an understanding of the nature of work and society. They must realise that they are going to enter a world where competition is inescapable. Schools should design their programs so that this understanding is well developed.

1.7.5 Current economic and social trends are placing pressure on schools to put more emphasis on broad competencies and job-related skills. An equal emphasis must be placed on the development of young people as unique individuals who have an ethical and moral sense, and an artistic sense, and who act responsibly towards others.

1.7.6 As a result of changes in the patterns of work, most people have more time for the constructive use of leisure now than was the case in the past. Education should prepare students for the constructive use of leisure as well as for the world of work.

1.7.7 The family provides a supportive environment in which the traditions and values of our culture are learned and maintained.

Students should develop an understanding of the importance of the family and the obligations of parenthood.

In the sections that follow, the major principles on which secondary education should now be based are presented in blue.

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2. Provision for secondary education

2.1 The Education Department should provide a continuous curriculum that extends from kindergarten to year 12.

2.1.1 Since the development of a person through childhood and adolescence to adulthood is a continuous process, it follows that the path of learning should also be continuous.

2.1.2 As a result of historical circumstances, educational provision in Tasmania has not followed such a path. There are separate kindergartens, many K–6 primary schools, special schools, 7–10 high schools and district high schools that provide education from kindergarten to year 10, and 11–12 secondary colleges. One high school and several district high schools have senior secondary annexes. These agencies of learning have worked independently and would benefit from a more cohesive approach.

2.1.3 The separation between the levels of schooling creates discontinuities which can have a detrimental effect on learning. The discontinuities have been especially noticeable between years 6 and 7, and between years 10 and 11.

2.1.4 This situation led to a widespread view in the community that year 10 marked the end of formal education for most students. The pressure of rising unemployment has weakened this view, but it has not disappeared completely, especially among students with low levels of aspiration and educational achievement. Furthermore, some parents have had few opportunities to see the benefits further education offers in a modern economy and society.

2.1.5 The future is bleak for many students who do not have the knowledge, training and maturity that can be gained in years 11 and 12, or through technical college studies.

2.1.6 The changes in course development and certification that have been adopted by the Schools Board of Tasmania will encourage students to extend their education. The Board has provided continuity of certification from year 9 to year 12, thus bridging the gap at the upper end of secondary schooling.

2.1.7 Careful attention must also be given to the earlier years of secondary education and their connection with what precedes and follows them.

2.1.8 Years 5 to 8 span a significant period in human development and the students in this age-group share a number of significant characteristics. They are relatively independent; they have for the most part mastered the basics of reading, writing and calculation; they are reasonably adept at physical manipulation; and they are beginning to handle concepts and variables with some confidence, and to enjoy doing so. In many cases their physical development is beginning to accelerate. Problems of early adolescence that were once evident mainly in years 7 and 8 are now evident in the earlier years as well. It is therefore possible, and sensible, to link the curriculum across the years 5 to 8.

2.1.9 A curriculum that is designed from kindergarten to year twelve will benefit students, unite teachers, generate increased understanding, and bridge gaps between levels of schooling that have persisted for generations.

2.2 Secondary schools and colleges should co-operate to provide for students from year 7 to year 12.

2.2.1 Tasmania's population is more dispersed than that of any other state. Significant numbers of students live in comparatively isolated rural areas, and this influences many of their attitudes.

2.2.2 Many parents in isolated areas lack the money to send their children to a secondary college. Other country parents who can afford to send their children to a secondary college believe that their children are not ready to leave home at 15 years of age. Nor do they want them to leave.

2.2.3 Some students in both country and urban areas do not believe that what is provided in years 11 and 12 will benefit them. Some parents support this view. This is despite the fact that many new courses are being offered by the colleges.

2.2.4 To deal with such issues, it is essential that the district high schools, high schools, special schools, secondary colleges and support services work closely together.

2.2.5 These agencies should provide a curriculum that meets the needs of three groups: those who have in mind tertiary level study; those who intend to undertake TAFE studies after years 10, 11 or 12; and those who intend to seek work after completing their secondary education.

2.2.6 It is desirable that all students, irrespective of location, should have access to a balanced range of courses that will enable them to complete secondary education and that prepare them for work or further studies. This is an objective which needs to be pursued over time.

2.2.7 Schools and colleges should combine to provide the courses for isolated students. When it is appropriate to do so, they should use external studies services and the opportunities that modern information technologies now offer.

2.2.8 Some of these courses could be provided through continuing education study centres attached to country schools.

2.3 Secondary education must provide for individual needs and differences.

2.3.1 The longer students continue their education the more their individual differences become evident, and the task of providing effectively for them becomes more complex.

2.3.2 Identifying the needs of students who display negative attitudes to learning is difficult. Special efforts have to be made to establish relationships between these students and their teachers, and to design programs which are seen by the students to be useful and worthwhile.

2.3.3 Schools and teachers need to take other factors into account when they are providing for individual needs and differences. Students differ in gender, in their economic circumstances, in

where they live, and in their ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, all students have particular talents and some possess special talents, and yet others are handicapped in some way. All these factors can affect a student's learning and achievement, and programs have to be devised with them in mind.

2.3.4 Schools and colleges cannot make up fully for the effects of attitudes or circumstances that are created elsewhere. Nevertheless, through deliberate action they can provide an example of care and concern and play a major part in promoting individual talents and reducing the effects of disadvantage wherever these are evident.

2.3.5 An essential part of promoting individual talents is the pursuit of excellence. When teachers are helping students to develop their talents, it is important to realise that what may be the apex of achievement for one student may not be for another, and that different students will display excellence in different areas of the curriculum and in different activities. If students are to be encouraged to develop to their own levels of excellence throughout their education, each student's successes and achievements are incentives to further learning.

3. The curriculum

'Curriculum' is used here to cover all the planned programs of study and learning activities provided by a school or college. These programs and activities should take account of changing economic, technological and social conditions.

3.1 The curriculum should provide all students with opportunities to gain knowledge and to participate in experiences that:

- **are widely regarded as being valuable because they enrich life and understanding;**
- **contribute to the students' development as independent and interdependent people;**
- **prepare them to become adult citizens who contribute to the culture, welfare and prosperity of the community; and**
- **enable students to develop a sense of Australian identity and international understanding.**

3.1.1 The curriculum should provide all students with experiences that:

- require them to apply their learning in everyday life, now and in the future;
- encourage them to develop their talents to the full;
- enable them to work successfully on tasks they believe are worth doing; and
- equip them to cope with the competitive world outside school.

3.1.2 Through the experiences provided by schools and colleges students should increase their knowledge and competencies, and come to understand how ideas and practices develop and change in response to new circumstances.

3.2 The most important fields of knowledge and experience are:

- **languages - using and studying the English language and other languages;**
- **the sciences and mathematics - including their applications;**
- **the arts - including literature, music, art, drama, the media and other expressive and practical arts;**
- **the social sciences - including history and geography, and studies of economics, politics, cultures and religions;**
- **the study of work and daily life;**
- **health, physical education, and recreation.**

(The order in which the fields of knowledge and experience have been listed has no special significance).

3.2.1 The fields of knowledge and experience do not constitute a list of subjects and courses. Subjects and courses should be derived from them.

3.2.2 All students in each year until the end of year 10 should study a balanced learning program derived from each of the fields of knowledge and experience. Providing a balanced program is not simply a matter of allocating equal time to all the fields of knowledge and experience. Each student's interests, background, abilities and learning needs should be considered. Students and their parents should be consulted and counselled to ensure that appropriate choices are made. Designing the curriculum in modules or grouping students vertically, for example, may give the flexibility required to organise suitable programs for each student. To make the best use of the time available some of the courses may need to be inter-disciplinary in nature.

3.2.3 In years 11 and 12 many students begin to have a clearer understanding of their futures and they should select courses that will prepare them for study at the tertiary level; or at a technical college; or for direct entry to the work force. During this stage in their development, many students' perceptions of themselves and their futures change, and options should be kept open to them for as long as possible. Consequently, it is important that students retain a degree of balance in their studies to ensure that they can change direction if it becomes necessary.

3.2.4 **Languages**

Studies in this field include courses and activities designed to improve students' mastery of their language for basic communication and thinking. The use of language as an art form is referred to later in this section. This field also includes the study of languages other than English. Australia's future depends to a great extent on its relations with countries of the Asian region. It is therefore essential that studies of the languages and cultures of the countries in the region should now be given higher priority than was previously the case. However this should not be to the exclusion of studies of the traditional European cultures and languages.

3.2.5 **The sciences and mathematics**

The word 'applications' has a special meaning here. Most teachers are aware that when mathematics and science are presented as theoretical and abstract studies many students are put off, and only those students with a special inclination towards these studies bother to pursue them. This cannot be allowed to continue, given the role that mathematics and the sciences play in the world. All students should continue studies in mathematics and science as long as possible. Mathematical and scientific studies should be designed for the complete range of student abilities.

The word 'applications' refers also to the mathematics and science involved in the study of technology, which is commonly defined as the application of knowledge to serve some useful, material purpose. In view of the role of technology in the

economy and in society, it is essential that students learn more about it, and come to understand it through practical experiences. The study of the effects of technology should also occur in the social sciences, including as they do the study of work and daily life in both rural and urban settings.

Examination enrolments show that girls are under-represented in studies of the fundamental sciences and mathematics. Efforts aimed at encouraging greater participation are already being made and these should be continued.

3.2.6 The arts

The inclusion of literature in this field should encourage a closer association of activities that lead to expressive and aesthetic development. Courses should be provided for the entire ability range.

The practical arts and crafts are included in this field. In Tasmania this group of studies is coming to have a special significance in the economy of an increasingly tourist-based, service-oriented community in which quality of design and craftsmanship are of fundamental importance.

3.2.7 The social sciences

This field should include, where appropriate, special emphasis on practical studies in citizenship and democratic processes; studies of the Asian and Pacific region; studies of the development of technologies and their effects on societies; studies of the media; and studies of comparative religion.

Australian studies are also part of this field. Courses should include studies of our history, heritage and contemporary issues.

3.2.8 The study of work and daily life

'Work' is used here to mean paid and unpaid productive activity.

Work experience and transition education programs are included in this field. Students should study work as a conceptual issue, and continue to have first-hand experience of roles, rights and

responsibilities in the workplace. Then they will be better able to assess what they want to do and what they can do with their lives when they leave school. Programs should be reviewed continually to ensure that they are appropriate for the students' present and future needs. Experiences of working in a competitive environment as an employee, as a manager and as an entrepreneur should be included in work experience programs.

Studies of daily life should also include activities that assist people during periods of unemployment to supplement a limited income and to make life more tolerable.

This field also includes studies of family life, child care and personal relationships, as well as consumer, business and legal studies and home economics.

Finally, practical studies of technology belong in this field. Students need to practise a wide variety of technologies used in work and daily life.

3.2.9 **Health and physical education, and recreation**

This field brings together knowledge and activities that are essential for the promotion of the physical, emotional and social well-being of individuals, and also for the well-being of society itself. For some students outdoor and adventure activities can make a special contribution to the development of self-confidence, self-esteem and other personal qualities.

Sex education and drug education are part of this field as well as courses in personal relationships and participation in a wide variety of leisure activities.

3.3 The courses studied should illustrate and apply ideas and principles that are generally regarded as being central to the fields of knowledge and experience from which they are derived.

3.3.1 Knowledge is growing and changing rapidly, and the quality of education will not be improved by simply requiring students to cope with ever-increasing amounts of information.

Consequently, the selection of content should be determined by the following criteria:

- the aptness of the content for illustrating an idea or principle;
- the relevance of the content in the light of the student's past experience and present stage of development; and, in some cases,
- the extent to which the content applies to and supports learning in more than one field of knowledge and experience, thus helping students and teachers to make the best use of the time available to them.

3.4 The curriculum should provide students with opportunities to develop the competencies and characteristics that are essential for life and work in our society.

3.4.1 'Competencies' are the broad groupings of skills that cross subject boundaries. The competencies are at least as important as knowledge itself. If they are not developed and used, knowledge will remain inert, and cannot be applied.

3.4.2 First, there are competencies associated with becoming able to converse, read and write, and calculate. Most students develop these competencies in primary school; some students will continue to need help in secondary school.

3.4.3 Then there are competencies that enable students to extend further the ability to learn, and go on learning, throughout life. These competencies begin to develop in early childhood and become increasingly complex as students progress through school. The competencies should be developed and applied across the fields of knowledge and experience and should be incorporated in all the courses that are taught. The most important of these competencies are:

Acquiring information

This includes listening accurately and critically to oral presentations; gathering data from computer information-systems;

identifying the main ideas from print and graphic material as well as from film, television and radio presentations; reading different kinds of fiction and nonfiction; observing and recording practical experiences.

Conveying information

This includes talking and writing for particular purposes; using a range of media to tell a story or present factual information; using models to explain ideas; demonstrating the difference between major ideas and less important ones; and doing all these for a range of audiences.

Applying logical processes

This includes inferring from observations; analysing and interpreting information; calculating number relationships and values; solving practical and theoretical problems; forming hypotheses; predicting and anticipating consequences; identifying assumptions and evaluating requirements.

Undertaking practical tasks as an individual

This includes choosing, planning and organising a range of tasks, including those that require a degree of physical dexterity, and seeing them through to completion without supervision.

Undertaking practical tasks as a member of a group

This includes undertaking activities similar to those described in the previous paragraph, but with emphasis on co-operation, negotiation and leadership, which all involve the experience of being a contributor to a group effort.

Making judgments and decisions

This includes identifying alternatives, evaluating evidence and ideas, and selecting appropriate courses of action.

Working creatively and solving problems

This includes the ability to use ideas and materials inventively –

recombining ideas to meet new situations and contexts, and extrapolating beyond what has been given explicitly. These creative and problem-solving activities should be practised in all fields of knowledge and experience.

3.4.4 Finally, for life and work in our society students need more than knowledge and competencies. They need to develop and display the characteristics that embody the spirit and values on which our society is built. These characteristic ways of acting are:

Acting autonomously

This includes displaying initiative, self-confidence and control, resilience, and entrepreneurial skill across a range of human activities.

Acting responsibly

This includes considering how actions will affect others as well as oneself, being tolerant or firm when appropriate, and valuing democratic processes and fundamental human rights.

Showing care and concern for other people

This includes being sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others, respecting different opinions and ways of doing things, being friendly and helpful, and being able to express love and affection.

Being concerned about values and beliefs

This includes examining how ideas and actions reflect beliefs, making moral judgments, and appreciating the values, rights and obligations of ourselves and others.

Where the issues are controversial, the Education Department's policy statements on such matters must be followed.

3.4.5 The competencies and characteristics are interconnected. They are learned through participation in the daily life of the school as well as through planned programs of study.

3.5 The competencies and characteristics should be encouraged and developed deliberately and systematically through example, and through the courses that are provided. Their development must not be left to chance.

3.6 All courses must contain clear statements of purpose and the criteria for assessment.

3.6.1 The statements of purpose should show:

- what the course is intended to develop in the student;
- the competencies, ideas and principles included in the course;
- the kinds of learning activities and the teaching styles that will be used; and
- the relationship of the course with other courses in the curriculum.

These statements should enable students and parents as well as teachers to make informed decisions about the learning program.

3.6.2 Each student's achievements should be assessed by teachers and by the students themselves according to the following criteria:

- the extent to which the student has developed the competencies and characteristics;
- the extent to which the student can apply the central ideas and principles derived from the fields of knowledge and experience;
- the extent to which the student knows the content of the courses studied.

3.7 The organisation and curriculum of the school must be flexible enough to cater for the needs, abilities and interests of all students.

4. Students

Students in secondary schools face the challenges of adolescence and participation in adult life, as well as the challenges of school learning.

4.1 The social environment in which students learn should be developed deliberately to promote learning.

4.1.1 Creating a supportive social environment is one of the most important tasks for a school – a task that schools must work at continuously.

4.1.2 In the past many students left school to get a job as soon as they turned 16. Getting a job was more attractive than staying at school. Now, fewer students can find employment at 16.

As a result many more students will stay on at school. Unless schools create environments that strongly attract students to learning, the results will probably be increasing disaffection, apathy and disruptive behaviour, and very little worthwhile learning.

4.1.3 A supportive learning environment is one where students are encouraged to build on their achievements. Students are then more likely to develop the confidence they require to persevere and to contribute effectively in a competitive world.

4.1.4 Methods of organisation that enable students to work with a small number of teachers help to create good personal relationships. Deliberate action must be taken to:

- create caring and positive attitudes in the relationships between students and teachers;
- improve students' self-image by providing opportunities for success at meaningful and achievable tasks;
- provide for personal tutoring and counselling, and continuity in teacher-student relationships.

4.2 The courses studied by students should match and extend their abilities and interests.

4.2.1 Students in any group learn at different rates and in different ways, and are at different stages of development.

Consequently, approaches should be adopted that are appropriate to the students' stages of development and that provide them with achievable goals.

Course planners should take account of the fact that most secondary students are passing through a developmental stage during which new matter and new ideas are best approached from a practical and concrete point of view.

Essential skills and content should be presented in ways that enable students to master them. This may require that the time for learning be extended, either by slowing the pace of teaching for some or by allowing time for a return to the essential matter presented – perhaps treating it in some new way.

In each course, opportunities should be provided to extend the most able, and to enable all students to develop their capacity for independent action and learning in the pursuit of their individual levels of excellence.

4.2.2 Unless activities are designed to motivate, stimulate and challenge students it is unlikely that much learning will occur.

4.2.3 For students who see little value in school because of their background, ability or prior experience, conventional approaches may need to be replaced by other approaches based on their interests.

4.3 Courses should be selected and developed in consultation with students and their parents.

4.3.1 Students will do their best when they feel involved in decisions about their work and are strongly motivated to learn. They should feel that they are part of a joint enterprise with their teachers. This approach is best developed through continuous consultation, counselling and co-operative planning. As a result, teachers and students should reach a shared understanding about the work required, how it should be done and how it will be assessed.

This consultative approach should be deliberately and systematically extended to parents so that they are better able to provide the support at home that all students need.

4.4 Where students' attitudes and behaviour cause problems, a range of problem-solving strategies should be used.

4.4.1 In all schools there are students who appear to be apathetic. There are other students who engage in mischievous behaviour, and some – a small number – whose behaviour can seriously disrupt the work of other students. A graded series of strategies is needed to deal with these problem behaviours.

4.4.2 The behaviour of apathetic students can be improved through the kinds of consultation, counselling and course provision referred to earlier in this statement. Disruptive behaviour – whether it is minor in nature or more serious – can be prevented or improved by the application of a discipline and incentive policy developed co-operatively by teachers, parents and students.

4.4.3 Teachers, parents and students are more likely to understand and be committed to school rules that are fair and consistent and that they have helped to shape. Teachers and parents can support each other in managing difficult situations, and students are likely to be more responsible and co-operative in their behaviour.

4.4.4 There may still be students whose behaviour causes severe problems for themselves and others. Schools may need to call on support services or outside agencies, and work in close collaboration with them and with parents in dealing with these students. The best results will be obtained if a problem-solving rather than a punitive stance is taken.

4.5 The main purpose of assessment is to help students to learn.

4.5.1 It is very easy for students to become discouraged by assessment

procedures, particularly those methods that place undue emphasis on comparing one student with another. Where this occurs many students experience failure for much of their time in school. Assessment must not discourage students. If it does, students will turn away from learning, and ultimately the community as well as the students will suffer.

4.5.2 For assessment to be a positive aid to learning it should be continuous, it should identify strengths as well as weaknesses, and it should point to the means whereby students, teachers and parents can improve levels of achievement.

4.5.3 One of the most powerful aids to learning is assessment that is undertaken systematically by the students themselves. Self-assessment is a skill that should be taught and used to complement the assessments made by teachers.

4.6 Students should prepare records of their achievements to help them enter adult life.

4.6.1 The compilation of records of achievement should be a joint enterprise of teachers and students that reinforces all of the teaching and learning that has occurred.

4.6.2 As the principles set down in this statement are implemented, students will begin to exhibit a wide range of attainments that cannot be recorded in a brief school report or in a summary certificate of the kind that the Schools Board provides. Often, these attainments are of critical importance to the students, and affect employment opportunities and the course of adult life generally.

4.6.3 Each student should take from school a record of achievement that supplements the Schools Board Certificate and gives a picture of a young person with particular talents and skills who can act responsibly and independently.

4.7 Students' achievements should be celebrated regularly.

4.7.1 An important part of each student's learning is the recognition and sharing of their achievements. Students achieve in all areas of school life, including academic, social, cultural, sporting, recreational and community activities. The achievements that should be publicised are those that are a significant development. All students make achievements of this kind regularly.

4.7.2 Celebration is the public recognition, affirmation and encouragement of students' achievements. Regular recognition of achievement strengthens the feelings of satisfaction and success that are essential for the development of self-confidence and motivation.

5. Teachers

5.1 For the principles in this statement to be implemented teachers must have the requisite knowledge, and an extensive repertoire of teaching competencies and characteristics.

5.1.1 Teaching is a systematic and pragmatic art. To practise it successfully, teachers must display a range of competencies and characteristics.

5.1.2 There are competencies that are basic to the art of teaching:

- engaging the learner's imagination and curiosity;
- questioning and instructing;
- listening sympathetically;
- encouraging and praising;
- telling stories, anecdotes and histories;
- helping students to do things better; and
- using a variety of teaching styles and methods.

5.1.3 There are the competencies associated with the management of a class, a group and a student:

- involving students in the planning and selecting of activities;
- ensuring that all students can participate successfully in the learning activities;
- providing activities that extend and challenge all students;
- organising time for students to complete their learning; and
- working productively with other teachers, parents and members of the community.

5.1.4 All of these competencies are difficult to master to the extent that they can be used flexibly as the occasion demands. They cannot be mastered during pre-service training or by teachers who only work alone. Teachers need to observe the practices and skills of others, and work together to improve their competencies.

5.1.5 There are also personal characteristics that teachers must exhibit:

- showing care and concern for all students;
- being fair and just in all dealings with students;
- displaying enthusiasm for what is being taught;
- insisting that the work done by students should always be their best;
- being willing and able to change and to cope with changing circumstances.

5.1.6 Energetic efforts must be made to create opportunities for teachers to work constructively and critically with each other throughout their working lives.

5.2 Teachers must continually update their knowledge to ensure that what students are taught is what they need to know.

5.2.1 Social, economic and technological changes require the introduction of new subject matter into the curriculum to replace content that has become obsolete. Further, teachers need to be able to teach a wide range of courses if they are to cater for the increasingly diverse needs of students.

5.3 Teachers need the skills that enable them to act as effective tutors and counsellors.

5.3.1 Teachers have a critical role to play in caring for the welfare of their students and in ensuring that each student's educational program is coherent and meaningful. Most students need sensitive advice and guidance to help them make wise choices.

5.3.2 Some teachers will need to develop special expertise in working with students whose behaviour causes serious disruption to other students' learning.

5.3.3 Teachers also have to be able to communicate effectively with

parents and members of the community to gain their support and co-operation, and to be receptive to their suggestions.

5.4 All schools should implement a continuous program of staff development.

5.4.1 A school staff development program should enable teachers to review their practices regularly and implement changes where they are necessary. Teachers must collaborate in these processes and senior staff should give careful consideration to how best to create opportunities for all teachers to be involved.

6. Parents and the community

6.1 Schools and the community are interdependent.

6.1.1 Schools and students depend on parents and the entire community for support. They need to know and understand each other.

6.1.2 Equally, parents and the entire community depend on schools to provide the form of education that will best help young people to make their way in life and contribute to the common good.

6.2 Teachers and educators at all levels in the education system should consult and work with students, parents and community representatives.

6.2.1 Consultation is essential if the principles set out in this statement are to be put into practice effectively.

6.2.2 This process should be practised diligently and systematically to ensure that education programs reflect the traditions of our society and develop in students the personal qualities valued by the community.

Conclusion

This statement of principles describes the goals and objectives for secondary education in the future, and indicates how they should be interpreted. Action to implement the principles should begin immediately. A systematic and continuing program of evaluation should be established to monitor the process and to ensure that the principles are translated effectively into practice. A feature of this process should be consultation with all those who have an interest in the work of schools as well as the analysis and evaluation of factual information about the progress made towards the achievement of objectives.